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U.S. and Belgian Governments Launch Initiative to Detect Illicit Trafficking of Nuclear Material

***Equipment Will Help Thwart Terrorist Attempts to Smuggle Components for
Nuclear Weapons and "Dirty Bombs" through Seaports***

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM -- The United States and Belgium today announced an effort to cooperate in the war on terrorism by signing an agreement to install radiation detection equipment at the Port of Antwerp, one of Belgium's busiest seaports. U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Tom Korogolos joined Belgium's Minister of Finance Didier Reynders at the signing ceremony. The equipment will be used to detect hidden shipments of nuclear and other radioactive material.

The agreement is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Megaports Initiative which is a program aimed at thwarting illicit shipments of nuclear and other radioactive material.

In a statement on behalf of the NNSA made at the signing ceremony, Ambassador Korogolos asserted that "implementation of the Megaports Initiative in Belgium will not only strengthen security at one of the largest seaports in the world, but it will also help to put a stop to terrorist attempts to use the global maritime industry for malicious purposes."

Under the Megaports Initiative, NNSA works with foreign partners to equip major seaports with radiation detection equipment and provides relevant training to deter, detect, and interdict illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials.

"The United States and Belgium both recognize the threat posed by the illicit trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive materials through the global maritime shipping network," said NNSA Administrator Linton Brooks. "The United States is gratified to have a close partnership with Belgium in this important initiative. Our cooperation will further international nonproliferation and anti-terrorist efforts."

The specialized radiation detection technology was developed by NNSA laboratories as part of overall U.S. government efforts to improve the security of the international maritime trading system and to stem nuclear proliferation.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear energy. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

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